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Photo: Dave Trampore



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MM
25



A willing guzzle...

A mouthful of the good stuff. Dylan Ferrandis enjoyed his sixth MX2 podium of the MXGP campaign but this was undoubtedly the sweetest tasting champagne for his second career victory in the Czech Republic with Jeffrey Herlings an anxious TV viewer back in Holland

Photo by Ray Archer



MX



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Country mile...

Marc Marquez and his HRC crew were once the butt of a few jokes after his pitlane miscalculation in Phillip Island three years ago but the largely Spanish collective nailed their strategy at the Sachsenring to help '93' streak to a third win of the year and a mountainous 48 point lead in the MotoGP table. Of course a little 'motocrossing' from Marquez early in the wet German GP helped...

Photo by CormacGP



MotoGP






AMA-MX

Timely Tomac...

No sand this time. Eli Tomac took his second AMA 450MX victory of the season in front of Ken Roczen and provides a reminder to the brilliant German that a second title in the American series will not be easily won. A 55 point gap exists between the pair but the Suzuki man still has to race-out three more rounds

Photo by Simon Cudby



A close-up, low-angle shot of a red motorcycle's handlebars and engine area. The motorcycle is a Reikon GPX 6.5 Carbon helmet. The background is a blurred, greyish-white, suggesting motion or a dusty environment. The text "JOHNNY RIDES LEATT" is overlaid in large, black, sans-serif capital letters.

JOHNNY RIDES LEATT

GPX 6.5 CARBON HELMET

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MX

GRAND PRIX OF CZECH REPUBLIC

LOKET · JULY 24th · Rnd 13 of 18

MXGP winner: Max Nagl, Husqvarna

MX2 winner: Dylan Ferrandis, Kawasaki

NAGL BACK ON SONG

RAIN OR SHINE TIM GAJSER WILL ALWAYS BE THERE. AT THE GRAND PRIX OF CZECH REPUBLIC THE SLOVENIAN WAS FOUR LAPS FROM AN EIGHTH MXGP WIN UNTIL A RARE MISTAKE ALLOWED THE EQUALLY HIGH-PERFORMING MAX NAGL TO GRASP THE TOP STEP OF THE PODIUM INSTEAD. GAJSER IS STILL 100% FOR TROPHIES ON THE CRF450R THIS YEAR. THE SLICK LOKET HARD-PACK HAS BEEN LARGELY A SITE OF MISERY FOR JEFFREY HERLINGS AND THE KTM MAN SAT OUT THE THIRTEENTH ROUND OF EIGHTEEN MEANING THAT MX2 WAS OPEN FOR DYLAN FERRANDIS TO CONQUER...

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer

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MXGP CZE



It is a curious period for 2016 MXGP. After a three week break that allowed athletes room to pause, recover, test and be distracted by other race commitments, the calendar enters a extremely diverse phase. Last weekend saw Grand Prix tackling the slippery and stony hard-pack of Loket in the Czech Republic. The riders will then have to change tact completely this week for the bumps, holes and hellish sand of Lommel in Belgium and then a totally new prospect at Frauenfeld and the first Swiss Grand Prix since 2001 awaits seven days later.

For the first obstacle, MXGP and MX2 had matters complicated by summer showers at Loket. "It was a track where you could not make a mistake; you had to respect it," said Suzuki's Jeremy Seewer who ran to second position behind Monster Energy Kawasaki's Dylan Ferrandis; the Frenchman celebrating just his second career GP success in Red Bull KTM's Jeffrey Herlings' absence.

A few alterations to jumps here-and-there and the second year of using the 'old' long start straight were the noticeable changes in the Czech Republic and the rain that arrived Saturday and Sunday afternoon in time for the second motos just added an extra slick edge to the terrain that sweeps up and down the steep Loket hillside. "There are more pebbles here than I seem to remember," said Wilvo Virus Performance KTM's Shaun Simpson in his first full GP since recovering from a broken right hand (the Scot was fifteenth overall).

Loket is a typically good surface for HRC Honda Gariboldi's Tim Gajser. The Slovenian scored his first Grand Prix win only last year on similar dirt at Arco di Trento in Italy. This term the nineteen year old has been a revelation in MXGP and has a 100% podium record in the twelve previous fixtures before coming to the Czech Republic and thus a vast lead in the standings. Despite the formbook weighing heavily in his favour Gajser was undone by Rockstar Energy IceOne Husqvarna's Max Nagl. The German started better and was faultless in the first moto to keep '243' adrift

in second place. Gajser should have won the Grand Prix in a repeat of the duel in the second moto but slipped off the CRF450R with five minutes remaining allowing the Husky to power through.

The incident was a minor throwback to the early rounds of the season where Tim showed his MXGP rookie status with frequent rendez-vous with the ground. Gasjer was clearly cruising (to what would have been his eighth win from thirteen) at the time and gave no reason for the malaise except to admit a mistake. At some point in the approaching month the Honda man is clearly going to face the reality that he could become the sport's first back-to-back champion in different classes and it will be fascinating to see how he deals with that pressure, particularly surrounded by a number of rivals all well accustomed to a title run-in.

2016 has been a frustrating term for Nagl who has suffered without his reliable lightning starts and clearly some desire for extra set-up work with the FC450. The hiatus prior to Loket allowed the factory team some reflection. "In the last couple of weeks we changed many things on the bike and that can be risky during the season but we said 'let's go for it' and it worked; the bike feels so much better," he said. "Every time I go riding I believe in it a lot more and I can take more risks."







Almost...but not quite again for Anstie in the Czech Republic but the Husqvarna man was the most eye-catching athlete in MX2

His fifty point haul allowed him to leapfrog Monster Energy Yamaha's Romain Febvre into third place in the standings and within his goal for the season. The confidence boost from his first victory in 2016 will also make him a protagonist for the races to come in Belgium, Switzerland, Holland and the USA.

Febvre was relieved with a 3-3 after admitting that his race pace had not suffered after the concussion during qualification at the British Grand Prix but almost one month of 'pause' in his routine of training and riding had obvious affects on his stamina. "I had arm-pump after five minutes!" the Frenchman said of the first moto. His efforts were still enough to beat Monster Energy Kawasaki's Clement Desalle and teammate on the factory Yamaha Jeremy Van Horebeek who were running proof that anything less than a top-three start at Loket can be restrictive due to the similar lap-times and stingy layout in terms of inviting opportunities for overtaking. Red Bull KTM's Tony Cairoli was denied a dream comeback to the 350SX-F but Loket was never the Sicilian's preferred circuit (his last win there was in 2012, last podium in 2014) and he ended the day in seventh.

Russians Alex Tonkov and Vsevolod Brylyakov were kept away from round thirteen due to back and broken ankle injuries respectively and were therefore not among the queue of riders seeking to be the first alternative overall winner in MX2 this season. Observers of the 2015 Czech Grand Prix would have looked to Rockstar Energy Husqvarna's Max Anstie; the Brit was a clear winner last summer until ejecting out of the lead after the first corner of the circuit. Anstie (this time on the FC250 compared to the KX250F) was a remarkable force in the MX2 contest, barrelling through to second place in the first moto and up to Ferrandis' wheel tracks in the second until he crashed trying to seize the lead and dropped back to third behind Seewer.

Although his aspirations on the title have gone this was still a boost for Ferrandis in his quest to prove he is 'best of the rest' in MX2 and



He was the only one to beat Herlings in a moto back at Arco di Trento (even if the Dutchman was riding with injury) and now perhaps the only rider to dent the champion-elect's scorecard for the year (the great shame of Herlings' absence to a right collarbone problem being the erosion of his chance to create a perfect season of 'overalls').

A difficult time for KTM in the Czech Republic was compounded by a crash for Pauls Jonass as he clipped the fearsome step-down and crashed while fronting the first moto. The Latvian was taken to hospital and after checks was diagnosed with concussion and a broken nose.

Seewer's second place means that Herlings watched 42 points chipped away from his lead and with the gap now at 127; still two Grands Prix and one moto with two of the three remaining rounds of the series in Europe involving sandy surfaces and a set of circumstances where any bookmaker would be foolish to take speculative gestures against the twenty-one year old.

As for Gajser; his advantage now sits at 107 points and a two Grand Prix 'breather' with five to run. He can easily perch in championship mode and collect more results on or near the podium to realise a remarkable achievement in MXGP.









Nagl found favour with a largely partisan crowd. A decent attendance at Loket was largely split between German flags and Slovenian so the duel for the top spot was particularly apt



Plenty to think about for Cairoli with his bike change. Suzuki had a new face (below) with eighteen year old Arminas Jasikonis haunting the top fifteen on his MXGP debut. Jeremy Seewer (bottom, right) gave the yellow camp more cause for satisfaction at round nine of eighteen









CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MXGP OVERALL RESULT

Riders		
1	Max Nagl, GER	Husqvarna
2	Tim Gajser, SLO	Honda
3	Romain Febvre, FRA	Yamaha
4	Clement Desalle, BEL	Kawasaki
5	Jeremy Van Horebeek, BEL	Yamaha

MXGP STANDINGS AFTER 13 OF 18 ROUNDS

Riders		Points
1	Tim Gajser	576
2	Tony Cairoli	467
3	Max Nagl	451
4	Romain Febvre	448
5	Evgeny Bobryshev	419

MX2 OVERALL RESULT

Riders		
1	Dylan Ferrandis, FRA	Kawasaki
2	Jeremy Seewer, SUI	Suzuki
3	Max Anstie, GBR	Husqvarna
4	Benoit Paturel, FRA	Yamaha
5	Petar Petrov, BUL	Kawasaki

MX2 STANDINGS AFTER 13 OF 18 ROUNDS

Riders		Points
1	Jeffrey Herlings	597
2	Jeremy Seewer	470
3	Pauls Jonass	403
4	Benoit Paturel	359
5	Dylan Ferrandis	358

3(50) IS A MAGIC NUMBER...

By Adam Wheeler

It has been a busy and unsettling time for the most prolific team in MXGP in the past couple weeks. Jeffrey Herlings' glide to a third MX2 world title entered a mild spiral with the collarbone complication during the summer break; the problem could have happened in any Grand Prix moto as the bone and plate from his crash in Germany last year had been misshaped after the fall two weeks later in Sweden. The weakened collarbone eventually gave way while '84' was riding a 450 in a Dutch Championship fixture. Talk about a sense of déjà vu for Herlings and co. The Dutchman was no doubt an anxious spectator after being told to sit out the Czech Grand Prix but will be hoping for a green light this week to start pummelling the sand. The KTM crew then had to watch Pauls Jonass take what is becoming an annual massive tumble at Loket and an initial scan was thankfully abated by good news early evening at Karlovy Vary.

Aside from injury worries the factory unit have also been active once more on the technical side. A comparison test with 2017 models and in-house modifications to engine set-up between 450 and 350SX-Fs led Tony Cairoli to swoon again over his prized-but-now-neglected championship winning steed. A reunion was on the cards and Claudio De Carli and his crew together with Dirk Gruebel and the technicians in Munderfing had to dust off the data and settings information for a return to 350 power.

Cairoli won MXGP/MX1 for five years between 2010 and 2014 on the 350SX-F; the bike a brainchild of Pit Beirer and Stefan Everts to solve the '450 Equation' (too much power and speed). It was built at considerable cost to KTM and Beirer admitted it was a huge project that gave him sleepless nights if the combination with the diminutive Cairoli did not work. In fact the Sicilian was the only one who really shone on the smaller bike (a decent 2013 campaign

for Kevin Strijbs also) that carries less mass and inertia and therefore increased agility and with repercussions on corner speed. Cairoli was also no slouch away from the start gate despite his 100cc disadvantage and his prolificacy for hole-shots even forced a situation at the 2014 Grand Prix of Spain where KTM had the FIM measure engine internals to prove that the champion was achieving his speed on a 350 and not a rumoured 400 special.

After five rounds of the 2015 series Cairoli had his head turned by the factory's new 450SX-F that featured a five-kilo weight loss (this on the production version alone) and had been used to devastating effect by Ryan Dungey in the U.S. to capture a first Supercross crown in the premier class for the Austrians. Cairoli had started 2015 without victory (although a 3rd, 3rd, 2nd from the first four fixtures was not too shabby) and was perhaps 'on edge' about the hyped duel with Ryan Villopoto that would never come to pass while Max Nagl (on the KTM engineered Husqvarna FC450) started the season at a furious pace and no doubt gave 222 and his team food for thought. The new chemistry looked potent as Cairoli won first time out in Spain and then again at the next round in Great Britain. The synergy was broken – as was his left arm – in qualification at the following event in Italy. This year and Cairoli again surged to the top of the podium on two occasions after using the two closing rounds of '15 to test more electronics and other chassis tweaks with a view towards the current campaign. His pre-season injury, nerve damage and a prolonged recovery has not helped Tony's plight to regain his crown but ultimately his call to go back to the 350 provoked some interest. It was surprising to pick up an 'about time...' vibe from reactions on social media to the news.

Many thought Cairoli's 450 switch was a knee-jerk reaction.



Some in the paddock believed it was a mistake, even though those voices were initially quietened at Talavera de la Reina and Matterley Basin. Starting 2016 and something was a little 'off'. Glenn Coldenhoff has clearly struggled to get the 450SX-F working well for him and Shaun Simpson – such a threat last year on the older 2015 model and then a GP winner on the '16 factory bike – has also been discouraged. I'd heard whispers of a rear suspension set-up issue that led to some head scratching but there is little doubt that 2016 so far has been KTM's quietest in the premier class this decade.

Refining the '17 350SX-F has meant an extra batch of work for the team but according to some within the squad there is a positive vibe that Cairoli is returning to old pastures (with a newer version of the harvester). Speaking to Gruebel the German feels it is a good move. "I never really liked Tony on the 450 anyway," the affable Team Leader says, "he just looked stiff while on the 350 he always had different lines and was more confident."

"Whether it is a search for feeling or for form Cairoli has now made a bold choice..."

He has a point. At least aesthetically Cairoli has just morphed into the 450 collective whereas there was always something urgent and lively about him in the 350 era that made the 222 standout. "I felt I had to push the limit of the 350 more to stay with the others," he said last May. "The 350 was perfect and for sure is still good to win but at this time we have a really good 450 that feels very much like a 350. There is much more torque and it will help me around the kind of tracks we have at the moment. On some flat pieces you can put down all the power without risking much."

Whether it is a search for feeling or for form Cairoli has now made a bold choice. Ironically it came before his least effective track (only one podium since 2012 at Loket) and the Lommel sand where the extra power would be useful – even if he did dominate at the 2012 Motocross of Nations on the same track with the 350. In comparative terms it would be like watching Rossi climbing back on the Yamaha, Despres also on the WR or even Vettel back into a Red Bull car. Cairoli was the giant orange target for five years and against a fleet of factory 450 machinery, that has undoubtedly evolved in terms of hardware/software and power manageability but also without vast gains. For once it is hard to say which manufacturer is enjoying a purple patch when it comes to equipment. HRC seem to have the ideal package for Tim Gajser in terms of starts, speed, usability and reliability but the same potency is not working for Evgeny Bobryshev or Gautier Paulin. Kawasaki have yet to really shine with Clement Desalle on their new KX, Yamaha looked unbeatable with Febvre but 2014 runner-up Jeremy Van Horebeek cannot start and looks half the rider from that memorable term two years ago. Nagl has struggled on the FC450 and both Kevin Strijbos and Ben Townley were despondent at Qatar for the opening round when most of their pre-season testing work appeared to be off the map. And Suzuki had been the most consistent title threat since 2007.

While KTM are braced for an exciting launch and adventure in MotoGP they could use some spark in the sport that is basis for their philosophy and core market success. With Cairoli onboard and leading their MXGP charge for another two seasons – and the challenge of Herlings joining him for 2017 (also on a 350?) as well as the need to secure the Dutchman's services beyond next season – it is a ripe, exciting and nervy time for the team that were champions in both classes from 2010 to 2014.



Transit (above) and the Porter (right)



100%

100% might have been highlighting their exposure on the Tour de France recently with their Speedcraft performance glasses but this is only one aspect of their flowering range of products. Shown here are two of their Backpack options. The **Porter** is slightly smaller than the Transit with a 21 litre capacity compared to 23 and is both an inch shorter and half an inch thinner. The **Transit** boasts a front stash pocket like the Porter but its size increase and addition of elements like a sunglasses compartment (perhaps big enough for the Speedcraft) explains the 65 dollar price against the 45 for its smaller cousin. Laptops are catered for with special segments in each bag. The styling and design mean that both are options either for the track, school or cruising along the street.

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A CONVERSATION WITH JEFFREY HERLINGS

THE SPECIAL ONE

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer

A CONVERSATION WITH JEFFREY HERLINGS

In one sense you'd bet a decent amount of money on Jeffrey Herlings taking a MX2 race victory. After all he has almost 60 of them by the age of twenty-one and forged a routine of twelve in a row this year. The Dutchman has been nothing short of sensational on a 250 and is already the most-sought after rider in the Grand Prix paddock – any paddock – for 2018 despite having one more year to run with Red Bull KTM. The other side of Herlings involves high drama, mainly thanks to a glut of injuries in the last eighteen months that means '84' mixes devastating predictability with shocking asides.

We conducted this interview with Herlings in the middle his latest run and before the collarbone fracture that would end his hopes of a perfect MX2 season (for overall wins) and allow some old ghosts out of the closet. As a study of a supreme talent and a wonderful motorsport athlete it makes for revealing reading...even if more questions now have to be asked if he can actually bag that third MX2 title before MXGP beckons for the first time in '17...

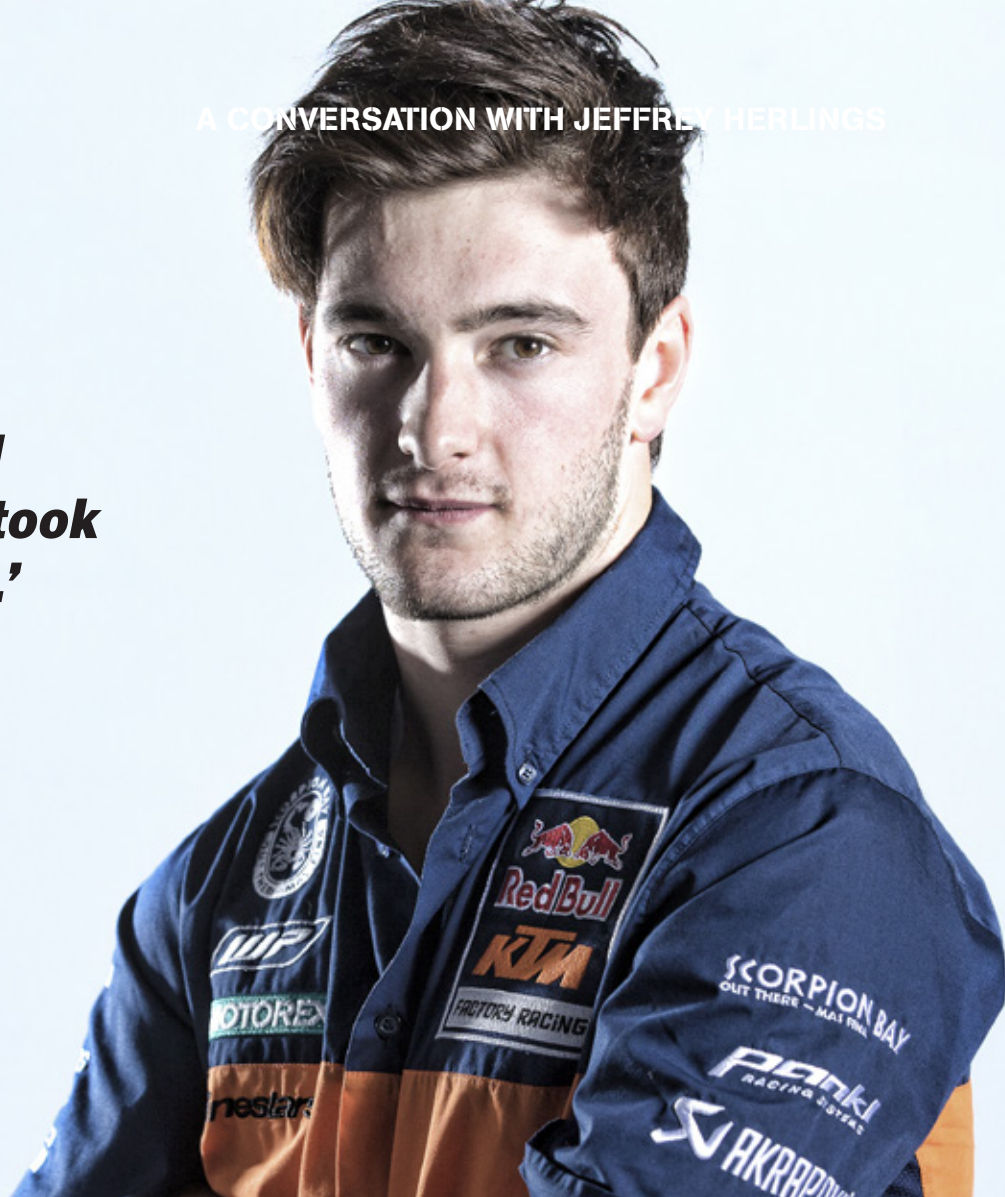
Jeffrey Herlings knows he is good. Sitting down to talk he carries the air of someone who has achieved a lot, talked a lot and is aware he has a name that is often on the lips of motocross and motorcycle racing fans worldwide. Two titles, two significant injuries, at least three waves of utter dominance in MX2 and one long-term association with the KTM factory all by the age of twenty-one means that he has also caught the attention of national press in his native Holland. In short he is a bit of a star...and has become used to enquiry about his mentality, health, preferences, personal life. He has been told since his early teens that he would be the 'saviour' of Dutch motocross. He has been groomed and fast-tracked to the peak of the sport on this 'side of the water' and has fulfilled all expectations and predictions while also showing a sensitive and tempestuous streak. Herlings has grown up in the public eye and under the glare of being a factory rider from his Grand Prix debut at fifteen years of age and coped (or sometimes hasn't) with rivalry, jealousy and pettiness.

That's not to say he is cocky. I've done numerous interviews with '84' and there were times when he could come across this way but it is usually goes hand-in-hand with how his life is faring on the track. We spoke midway through 2015 and he was troubled and not in his usual racing groove; he was almost vulnerable and admitted as much. Now, after a perfect season going to print – some ten Grands Prix and nineteen from twenty motos – he is back on easy form. The only difference is that he qualifies some of his more sure-fired remarks with acknowledgement gleaned from his experiences with injury that purple patches can be short-lived.

Let's get one thing clear Jeffrey is a bit different. Adoration and praise (and the pressure that comes with) and subsequent riches from early teenage years are bound to influence a young mind in ways that a great many people on the street cannot relate to. He can be eccentric. Often moving around the paddock in some untidy tracksuit bottoms and still operating from the changing area under the KTM truck compartment despite his lofty status in MXGP. He infrequently uses Instagram (with 150,000 people tagging along) but follows nobody. He only subscribes to Justin Bieber's Twitter feed despite having 26,000 watching him. He is very receptive to fans but is also a bit of a loner.

Part of the reason for his distance from social media and a close interaction with the public comes down to divisiveness, and this stems from some of his actions as well as his reluctance to leave the hunting ground of MX2 (his claim several years ago that he was too young to move to MXGP and on a 450 at the age of nineteen being made to look a little silly by Tim Gajser's current excellence). Ask people their opinion of Jeffrey and the responses are likely to vary from adjectives similar to 'genius' to labelling him a 'pussy'. He has proved to be unbeatable, and is an absolute wonder in the sand (remember his superiority in lapping almost the entire field at Lierop three years ago?). But he has also admitted to hanging around on a 250 to accumulate statistics and break records and close on the achievement of one-time idol and now nemesis Stefan Everts (more on that later). He has faced little in the way of a challenge since Tommy Searle left the category at the end of 2012 and a duel for supremacy that became ugly, petty and had fans lobbing sandwiches at the KTM in practice during the British Grand Prix.

“When the hip injury happened I just turned away from racing and took some time for myself...”



His injury misery has been compounded by the fact that he was on the edge of two further titles in 2014 and 2015 when disaster struck, and this partially explains his reluctance to launch into a new MXGP venture with the confidence levels diminished. People could forgive Herlings for another tilt at a third crown in 2016. The fact is with several years of sizzling form and lap-times on a 250 that would often put him in podium contention in the premier class, motocross followers feel he has outstayed his welcome in MX2. He has already totalled 57 GP wins and overtaken Joel Smets in the all-time list. Who could blame a racer and Pro athlete for wanting to leave a legacy? He still had to win the races.

For some curious reason he is a loud talker and it is easy to forget that English is not Jeffrey's first language so he can ramble a bit.

“Maybe sometimes I say too much or talk too much truth,” he says at one point. I ask him not to change. Some of his comments might be slightly raw or make him seem thoughtless and we chat about things that remain off the record, such as the details of a ‘win-only’ bonus with KTM. Purveyor of a good sense of humour and quick to swap banter there is the feeling that there is a lot ‘going on’ with Herlings. Some doubt and insecurity despite all the trappings of success and now a growing profile as one of the most sought-after riders on the scene – it is easy to believe that he could walk into any team in any series if he really wanted to. The challenge as the person sitting opposite him is to try and tap into some of those thoughts or get under those layers...

One week after Loket last year and that hip dislocation if I said to you that you'd go more than ten in a row in 2016 what would your reaction have been?

No idea because at that moment I was just 'over' racing. I had been into it since I was a small kid and you have a lot of luck – or things go your way – for so many years and then just for one full year everything goes against you. I experienced some of the worst injuries you can have: breaking a femur – the biggest bone in your body – and dislocating a hip. Man... then almost losing a finger, breaking a collarbone...all in one year. When the hip happened I just turned away from racing and took some time for myself. I bought a house and did some things that I'd never done before and also thought about my future. For over three months I wasn't 'into' racing. I could walk again after two months but I didn't train or anything. Then at one point I started to feel better, like I wanted to do something, and started physiotherapy. It went very well. To answer your question I would never had thought of winning races like this. It is pretty good... and pretty special.

What different things did you do? What things did you discover about life without racing because your lifestyle when competing is pretty all-consuming isn't it? Were you worried at all?

I was worried. At that time I didn't really know if I could come back. The broken femur had a bad infection as well so I was really happy it healed but then the hip was also badly damaged. They said I'd need a hip replacement at a young age if the cartilage didn't grow back. The impact I had from [Jordi] Tixier messed it up quite a bit. I was scared for the future and was thinking 'what am I gonna do if I cannot race?'. Everything turned out and luckily I don't have a problem with the hip. It still feels a bit stiff compared to the other one but whether I'm riding, cycling or doing something else it doesn't bother me.

You went from being the guy who is pretty invincible on the track – apart from that dislocated shoulder in your rookie year in 2010 – and surviving scrapes in Ernee and Valkenswaard...to then getting hurt a lot. It's a big contrast...

Yeah, I had three really solid years. 2014 was good and I had a small crash and missed the GP in Brazil but I was back on the bike after nine days. Then I broke the femur on a mini-bike and it was like 'dude; what are you doing?!' I was never in good shape after that but in my head I thought I was. The truth is that physically and mentally I wasn't ready for the season [2015] and performing like I thought I would be. It was tough to accept and to come from domination in 2013 where I won all the races I did and nearly did the same in 2014. Then in 2015 I was getting beaten in pre-qualifying or in motos and I couldn't handle it. I just snapped. Now if I don't win then I can accept it, like in Italy this year [Ferrandis beat him in the first moto] and I was just happy to go home safe. Things change. I've gotten older, I have a house and I want a good and long career. It is more important to go home healthy. If it is a bad day and I have fifth in one moto and a win in the other than I'd prefer to have that than go crazy and maybe go down and home injured.

What were you like when you were injured? A different person?

The first time yes. I was stressing because I had to be back on the track in eight weeks [to defend his lead in the 2014 championship]. Normally it wasn't an option and with the infection more difficult but we did it. The second time I thought 'I'm just gonna let this heal... even if it takes six months or a year'.

You mentioned doing things you hadn't done before, such as?

Well, my brother had a child and I was a lot with my niece. She is two and a half now, so I'd go there for a play while my brother and his girlfriend worked. I also bought the house and

worked on the interiors with the furniture and all the appliances and decoration. It took a lot of time...but I had the time.

Was it quite easy to find the right house?

I'd been looking for a long time as my parents are divorced and I'd been thinking about it since I was pretty young. I wanted a place for myself and it was also an investment for the future. It was the right time, and to step out from my mum. She's the best woman on earth but when you are reaching twenty-one you want your own place...! It took two years to find the house and I just went for it.

You're pretty good with kids. I see you making the time at races...

Sometimes I forget and sometimes I remember what it was like to be a kid and have heroes. He might not think it now but Stefan Everts was my hero. Ricky Carmichael and James Stewart also. I remember thinking as a kid 'why don't these guys make time for me?' Of course you realise now that if there are tens or hundreds of people who want a photo with you then you cannot be there all the time and giving everybody what they want because you also need to focus on the race. When I have the time I try to do as much as possible because that photo meant the world to me. Sometimes I try to put myself in the place I was ten or fifteen years ago.

On the bike and as a racer you just seem like 'Mr Confidence' so to plummet to those low points it must have then been quite a trip to get back to where you are now: again that guy to beat...

I might have looked confident last year but on the inside I was eating myself. Every time I went to the start line I was 'man; I ain't gonna win, I'm not fast enough, I'm not fit enough, I haven't ridden enough.' Now I've had a perfect winter and no injuries – just a small twisted ankle that kept me off the bike for five days – and I feel confident. I know that to win a championship I don't have to win every week. If I

have a bad weekend and come in third then 'so what?' Nobody will know who won the German GP in 2016 but they will know who won the 2016 championship-

The Germans will know...

OK, maybe the Germans will! But against the championship it is not important to win the GPs. It is that 'fight and war' saying: I've won many fights in the last few years but not too many wars.



It has been a curious trip for you. 2010 and a GP debut as a fifteen year old, then you turned into this cocky kid with some weird behaviour, then there was the battle with Tommy, then the dominance phase and the injury phase: so what kind of person are you now?

It feels like I have been through everything! Too young, too much, too quick. It has been six-seven years now. I've had a lot of success and bad luck as well but I think everything is about confidence and experience. With the experience I have now then I know I wouldn't have been injured last year; even a top three or top five sometimes last season would have given me the championship easily. But I thought I had to win. To show the people I was the fastest all the time. That's what 'killed me'. Now I go to a GP just hoping to do my best. I've been in serious pain twice and had enough surgeries. I don't care what people think any more. If Ferrandis beats me in a moto then fair enough; let him be happy...I want that championship and to do what I get paid for. I will try to do it in the best way...and the safest.



Without getting too sappy...you're actually quite a sensitive guy aren't you? We've seen the tears flowing more than once and some angry post-race reactions as well on TV...

I get mad or pissed off when people just do stupid things [in reference to his outburst on TV at the German GP this year]. This sport is already dangerous enough so why cut people off at the start? Are they jealous about me winning? Then just train harder and beat me straight up like a man. Don't play it that way. I try to work on that emotional side and put it away but sometimes it comes out. On the outside it can look worse than it is! I'm still a racer and I race with my heart and because I love it. I guess sometimes it is not always good to say the truth or what you want to really say. Well, sometimes.....especially for a journalist because he can keep on writing stuff.

OK, on that note, tell me about Stefan Everts. It seems like a bizarre relationship. You idolised him, worked with him and now there is animosity. What happened?

To me, it is like he saw me as a guy that could potentially break his records or be better than him or whatever. He would tell me not to ride the bike in the winter and that I should rest for three months when I didn't want to. He let me go to a shop and spend 8000 euros on a new bike instead of wanting to help. Things like that made me think 'why?' When I broke my femur at his race [Everts and Friends Charity Event] I tried to call him a couple of times. He never came and visited or helped me to feel better or with doctors to heal better or quicker. The crash was my fault but I didn't get any support afterwards and that hurt me. There were some other moments as well where I was disappointed. As a racer he was one of the best of all-time but on the human side...it was weird. He was my hero as a racer and I still have so much respect for what he did in his career and what he did for motorsport but as a person and towards me - I don't know - I cannot find too many positive things to say.

You're only twenty-one but does your body tell you otherwise?

Oh yeah. I've been tough on my body and sometimes sitting on the couch I can feel it. I don't even know where to start but I think the injuries that come and go also have an impact. I might have dislocated a hip but I also punctured my lung in my first year on the big bikes and sometimes I still have a problem with it and can get sick quickly. Things can sometimes accumulate...so you have to keep the list of injuries as small as possible! I think everybody has had some big things. Stefan was out two years in a row and Ricky as well and they are some of the best in the sport.

Assuming you have a pretty good bonus scheme, if you have a couple more seasons like now can you go on holiday for a long time?

[smiles] It depends on how much you spend!

Are you sensible with money though?

I've seen a lot of people come and go...I know how expensive life can be, especially now that I live by myself. I know that if you want to retire by 25 or 30 then you need a lot of money in the bank. Many people like watches, expensive shoes or cars and they are material things that I don't really care about. Buying a new car for 100,000 grand when it's worth 70 the year after is just wasting money. I really don't want to waste because my parents had literally almost nothing and the time when I signed for KTM they were virtually broke. I know how hard it was for them to make a living every month.

At least you don't have to buy clothes...

That's right DC hooks me up pretty good!

I figure you have maybe nine months before you seriously have to think about 2018 and the end of your KTM contract. Considering your age, what you've won and what you could do then you must be considered one of the most bankable athletes on the scene...so there will be a lot of thinking ahead. You'll have to consider your market value and Pit [Beirer, KTM Sport Director] is going to have to come up with some big numbers...

It all depends on results you know...

You're not doing too badly there...

That's right! But that's what it comes down to. I had a contract from 2009 until 2013, then another two years and then two years more. I've always just renewed and never really explored negotiations with another brand because I knew I was going to be in MX2 and the KTM was one of – if not 'the' – best bikes in the world championship. In my personal opinion KTM is number one. In MXGP there are more brands and manufacturers that are closer to each other. It could be interesting but there is still a lot of time to think about it and finally be in a position to look around properly. Or maybe I will just sign with KTM nice and early.

Pit has said that he enjoys the challenge of dealing with you but the next contract has the potential to be huge. Have you thought about getting help with that?

I've never worked with a manager to be honest-

Is that a trust thing?

Also...but when I make a deal I want to get the most out of it for myself as a racer. What more could a manager get out of it? Only something for themselves. I don't know a manager's rates but I've been doing it by myself up until now. Maybe I could have got more – I don't know – but I'm happy with what I have and I'm really happy with how KTM have been treating me.

So, to put you on the spot: I'm Pit Beirer and I have a contract here in front of you. What does your heart say?

Erm, you mean for 2018-2019? Now it is too early to talk about that and too many things can still change. Maybe a manufacturer comes up with a bike that is much better than someone else's and as a rider you might want to be able to negotiate with them. Or maybe KTM come up with one.

The rumour is that Stefan Pierer [KTM CEO] won't even let you go on a Husqvarna...

It's true. I had an option to go there but he told me he wants me on a KTM.

Lastly, you live in this bubble of training and racing and I just wondered if you have any concept of how people around the world see you and the things you are achieving. I always say that people have to see Herlings ride the sand. That regard and high esteem; are you aware of any of that?

People talk about the sand and when I hear those nice words I just get this really nice smile that I cannot avoid. People say that seeing me riding on the sand is something special but I don't really know too much about it; I'm just out there doing it and it feels like a daily job-

Well, forget about the sand how about all the wins and the position of dominance unlike any other athlete in any other class in motocross...

It's very cool but you know...everything in life is temporary. In ten years from now there will be another kid. Recently it has been Herlings, Roczen and ten years ago it was only Stewart. We passed through Villopoto and into Dungey. It is nice to feel like you are the king...but I also know about the other side and having people doubt you: Can he come back? Can he be as fast as before? Isn't he broken mentally? All those things. I know about being the king and the next day going from hero to zero. It's the sport. It's like with Bubba now man, and everyone saying he's 'done'. They forget how talented he is and what he can do. That's what racing is like.

A CONVERSATION WITH JEFFREY HERLINGS





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▶ ADAM CIANCARULO

FEATURE

IN THE RIGHT GEAR

Fly Racing have a vast catalogue of products for various segments of motorcycling yet the American firm's presence with some impressive motocross gear has been slight in the FIM Motocross World Championship. In 2016 the Kinetic lines can be spotted on the back of British Champion and Grand Prix winner Shaun Simpson. Even though the 28 year old Scot has been dealing with a broken right hand his thorough approach to protection and riding kit meant he was a good source for information on what an MXGP rider uses and wears across a Grand Prix weekend and how Fly rate in the mix

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer



MXGP GEAR: FLY



Professional athletes and sportsmen/women are endlessly striving for better. Their existence is centred on the quest for 'more', whether it is demands on their physique, mental approach, their equipment or their team. There is a myriad of factors involved with their obsessions for increased performance.

MXGP and AMA Motocross represent the highest levels of this particular sport and while attire and protection do not carry the same kind of importance as in road racing there is still a variation of attitudes in the paddocks towards riding gear and what it can do. Some are fussy and carefree about the possibilities and prioritise freedom on the bike. Others seek every means to lift their chances of emerging from a scrape unscathed and also put a high value on the resistance of their gear.

For this subject we have spoken to Shaun Simpson in the past - who is firmly in the latter camp - and the Scot was another port of call to discuss his Fly Racing Kinetic racewear and just how practical and useful it is for Pros. As Grand Prix is a test bed for bike manufacturers to prototype, the same advantage applies to the gear and accessory companies. So here is a rare view and opinion on the mountain of product riders and users see on dealer shelves and how the people at the sharp end feel about what it has to offer...

You've ridden with a broad range of gear and over a period of twelve years in Grand Prix so what was your impression of Fly for 2016? Has quality of general race kit advanced quite a lot?

I hadn't really followed Fly too much as a company but having started with them in 2016 I can see they are a firm that is definitely on the rise. They have always been hovering in the background but they haven't pushed particularly hard in Europe. It is a nice looking brand

and I'm glad that they have branched out... from the moment we sealed the team deal and they sent me some kit it was interesting to check it out straight away. You talk about quality but I noticed immediately that the gear was at a good level simply through the feel of the material and things like the stitching. It looked well-finished and well-done and was all labelled nicely. I've had kit before, especially the shirts, where it tends to look 'handmade' and a bit rough. Kit for the team is usually personalised and you find threads hanging off and it is a bit rushed. This wasn't the case when I opened the box from Fly; the buckles and tension system - which is a pod contraption - was really nice. The pant has a thicker material that is really durable. I'm 'all about protection' and with every single riding pant it all comes down to the knees. Almost every rider uses knee braces and during a thirty minute moto your knees are shuffling back and forward. When you get new kit it is normally wintertime and it is cold, wet, sandy, muddy and if you go out with poor material around the knees then after one day you can already be wearing through! It was nice to see that the Fly knee panel was very strong. It is like black leather and it fits nicely with the design and it is positioned well; with some of the other kit the positioning can be a bit off and that also causes wear. When you wash kit then the dye can run off the black panel. Not to slate One Industries but you could not wash a shirt with a set of pants last year because the black would run and you'd end up with a grey shirt! These types of things work well with Fly. Washing is a major part of your kit, especially if you are wearing six sets every weekend. Normally I have to powerwash afterwards but this year we have managed with the washing machine and a reasonable amount of space. It doesn't shrink and the knee panels don't shift either. It dries well and lasts well. If I was a paying customer then I'd be happier with the money I've spent.

MXGP GEAR: FLY







MXGP GEAR: FLY

Do you honestly find there is much difference between the kit brands these days? Who have you used?

Wulfsport, Alpinestars, UFO, One Industries, Dainese, Circuit...and there is quite a variance actually. The Fly stuff in comparison to what I've had in the last couple of years fits well and gives the feeling of protection. You could say I have an 'average' profile; I'm not too tall, or small or stocky or thin. My riding pants fit well and tighten to a perfect fit. There is quite a lot that goes into the way it feels around your ass and crotch and also the room for the shirt to fit. Many riders don't mind their shirt flapping around the back but I don't really like that. Even the gloves fit well. I usually use a large but with Fly it is a Medium and – again – when you wash they don't shrink so I can keep on using the Medium. They have a big range and I prefer the slightly older model that has a bit of protection on top. Some of the stitching can be a bit ropery on the gloves but on the whole it is pretty good. Overall the best thing is the feeling of the 'fit'.

It's like a uniform: it must be a bit disheartening when you open that box and the gear doesn't fit or look good and you think 'I have a whole year of wearing this...'

Yeah, and as a Pro we've got to wear it every race and every time on the bike, sometimes four or five times a week! We'll be wearing it for hours on end. As a paying customer you probably don't wear it as much but you still need that same quality and you don't want to be paying 150 quid for a set and the stitching starts to break or the dye runs out of the knees or the knee panel starts to crumple or holes appear. It is difficult for me to gauge the style of the regular shirt. We have a lot of logos on ours and I think it looks trick all logo-ed out, but when you see the standard version it looks a bit bare so it can be hard to judge what looks good. We also have a lot of vented shirts this year, which is great, but in the beginning the sleeves were way-too-short and Fly have since fixed that.

Do you think gear companies are receptive to your feedback? Can they change things? Or do they simply say: “sorry, this is what we have”?

I think most people accept and like feedback, although I think most companies are quite shocked to get feedback! Perhaps they assume that a Pro rider knows he is going to get whole boxes of kit and is not too bothered. Maybe they look more towards the paying customer for reactions but to be honest I am quite critical about all of my kit. If there is anything that can be improved then I am happy to discuss that. We haven't had too much of a chat with the guys at Fly yet but there are a couple of small points that I feel would need attention. I'm sure that companies are not used to feedback from the Pros and it should be important and they should ask.

How many sets are you using at each GP?

I generally go by the rule of how many times we are on the track so for a GP it is six sets and at a British Championship it is three. It is nice to look fresh. I used to get away with five sets at a GP - as it is one less to wash - but there is 'look good, feel good' feeling coming into play. Steve [Turner, Wilvo Virus Performance KTM Team Principal] also likes both Adam and I to wear the same so we'll organise it in advance and get it planned.

What part of racing gear is essential or first choice in your opinion?

It would have to be the pants. When you go down then you'll be skidding down the track and rubbing raw on stones and mud. Your hips take a lot of the brunt of a crash and you'll be black-and-blue also if you tangle with another rider. Your shirt offers hardly any protection, nobody wears elbow pads and your arms take a bashing from any roost. It is something you have to take. I like protection on the gloves, especially the fingers; I've got bad enough fingers as it is and we all know how much a

broken bone can hamper your season. Another thing to mention for the Fly pants are the zips for venting, which is good. It is all-well having thick material but you need some air in there as well - especially for the flyaways - as you'll have socks, knee braces socks and the braces themselves and it starts to become a bit of a package.

There seems to be a big effort in the performance of riding kit these days with stretch fibres and versatile material...quite a big movement since you started racing over ten years ago...

I think so. I'm not sure about this new performing gear that almost forms a second skin because you still need room for things like braces and chest protectors. I know Thor -with Desalle and Tixier - have a shirt that is pretty tight with a 'waistcoat' and it is a little bit of a different style. I cannot see too much more evolution in the future to be honest and Federations are moving more on safety now with chest protector and back armour regulations. I wear a kidney belt and not many people do. I think there is a generation of riders now that sacrifice a bit of protection to feel 'loose' and 'free'; it is a very personal thing.

If there is anything you could add to riding kit what would it be? Especially with lightweight material these days...

I haven't thought about it too much but I suppose grip is always a thing to look at. Your ass on the seat...because we are always looking at the seat cover in that respect. Fly do quite a good grip around the waistband of the pants and that helps grip the shirt inside. The buckle on the side and the tensioner is pretty advanced stuff and I don't think anybody else has this. I wouldn't have kit too tight but I wouldn't add much to the material either in terms of roost protection but perhaps there is still something that can be done in that area.

MXGP GEAR: FLY



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AMA-MX

WASHOUGAL NATIONAL

WASHOUGAL MX PARK, WA · JULY 23rd · Rm

450MX winner: Eli Tomac, Kawasaki

250MX winner: Alex Martin, Yamaha



ROU
CHAMPIONSHIP
OF WASHOUG
PRODUCED
OVERALL FOR THE
THE 250MX
CIRCUIT KAWAS
TEENAGE FO



TOMAC WASHES ‘EM OUT

By Steve Matthes
Photos by Simon Cudby

ND NINE OF THE LUCAS OIL AMA MOTOCROSS PRO
VISITED THE FAST SWEEPS AND SHALLOW SLOPES
AL AND MONSTER ENERGY KAWASAKI'S ELI TOMAC
D A BLAZING SECOND MOTO TO WIN AND CLAIM THE
SECOND TIME THIS SEASON. ALEX MARTIN OWNED
X DIVISION BUT THE FIRST MOTO VICTORY FOR PRO
SAKI'S AUSTIN FORKNER WAS A REMINDER OF THIS
RCE THAT IS GATHERING MOMENTUM IN THE SPORT

Round nine of the Lucas Oil Pro Motocross Championships took place in scenic Washougal, Washington and while the backdrop was pretty and serene things weren't nearly that nice between some of the racers.

Yamalube Star Yamaha's Cooper Webb has taken control of the 250MX series with some great rides but along the way he's created some controversy as well. Webb came into the season nursing a wrist injury and while that got better, he got faster. Webb limited the damage early on as Monster Energy Pro Circuit's Joey Savatgy racked up moto and overall wins. He turned hot around the fourth race and it's been nothing but roses since. But Cooper being Cooper, and as we saw in the supercross series while he was on his way to winning his second straight 250SX title, he's got that edge. That chip right there on his shoulder and perhaps it's what he needs to drive him to the success he's had.

At High Point Webb has an issue with Savatgy and his non-penalty for jumping on a red cross and he let the Pro Circuit team know that after the race. There's been drama with Webb and missing his post-race press conferences, to the point where he was informed that one more late appearance and he would be put fortieth on the gate. Shortly after this issue Webb issued a series of Tweets where he bad-mouthed the series promoter MX Sports. Combine all this with his practice melt-downs in supercross and you have a young man that rides with heart and speaks his mind; it's all part of his package.

His first moto at Washougal saw him get a poor start and only make it back to third. He grabbed the holeshot in the second moto and was passed soon after by Savatgy in a bit of an aggressive move that saw the Kawasaki rider take Webb very wide at the bottom of an uphill. And that aggression was not going to stand as Webb went inside of Savatgy on a left/right switchback and when the right came

up, decided to test Savatgy's brakes out. It was a move to retaliate against Joey's pass and it, uhh, didn't work. Savatgy drove into Webb and knocked them both down! With the track being so tight in that spot, it caused a massive pile-up and allowed Austin Forkner, Savatgy's teammate (the beneficiary of Savatgy's move on Webb), to get a seven second lead.



Both riders were way back after Webb's move and although Webb recovered to finish sixth and third overall on the day, he surely cost himself an overall win with the payback. Savatgy's move...not that smart. Webb's move? Definitely not that smart but that's the way kids are and emotions are high in the moment. If you're in Webb's team and management at Yamaha, you'd like for Webb to understand that a win is the ultimate payback. Words were exchanged between the riders at the podium as well as back in the pits and as the series winds down, the emotions are running higher.



AMA MX WASHOUGAL





AMA MX WASHOUGAL





Alex Martin showing race-winning form in 250MX while Ken Roczen leaves round nine and entering a small summer break with a decent feeling from second place and more points towards a second 450MX crown



"We want to win and we weren't close to that today, so that's kind of a bummer. I didn't get a good start in the first moto but I got back to third so I was happy with that," said Webb. "In the second moto I got the holeshot but then we [Joey Savatgy and I] got tangled up. From there it was a mad dash to make up as many positions as we could, so that's what I did. It was tough to charge on the track [in the second moto] so I'm happy with how far back I was able to get [in the running order]."

The drama between those two really took away from another chapter in the amazing rise of Webb's teammate Alex Martin. Last year saw the veteran grab his first moto win ever in his seventh season. That's sort of amazing if you think about it. Martin was signed to the official Yamaha 250 support team this year (joining his brother Jeremy) and proceeded to promptly crash his way out of many supercrosses. Early on it seemed that Martin wasn't going to be able to take that step but since the series went outside, A Mart's been A-great all series long.

After leading the third most laps in the class but unable to get a win, Martin finally broke through at Washougal with a great first moto that saw him lead gate-to-flag. In the second moto he got a poor start and was granted many positions with Webb making his move on Savatgy. A poor start was, for once, great!

Martin worked through the pack (Forkner, granted that big lead in the "the incident" would go on to win his first pro moto ever and get second overall via 10-1 scores), passed TLD KTM's Jessy Nelson late for the runner-up spot and take his second career 250MX overall win. The first triumph earlier this year at Glen Helen was earned with 2-2 scores. That moto win had been a long time coming. "Hard pack conditions [like at Washougal] can be tough for me, so I've tried to train in California to help with that. I was pretty excited to get third holeshot and lead every lap. I had pressure from

Joey [Savatgy] the whole time and I've been so close [to winning] all year, so it feels so good to get that out of the way," said Martin. "I didn't get a good start in the second moto but there was a little chaos and I was able to get through it in fourth. I had a battle with Jessy [Nelson] and got by him and then Martin [Davalos] had his problems, so we were able to get up to second and wrap up the overall."

In the 450MX class, Monster Energy Kawasaki's Eli Tomac grabbed his second overall with 2-1 scores. His second moto was very impressive as he hunted down RCH Suzuki's Kenny Roczen, passed him and left the dominant rider in 450MX this year in his dust. Tomac's other win came in the sand and there were plenty of questions about whether it was just the soft stuff that he was so good in.

Of course we knew better but Roczen's been so good that it's been hard to see him get caught, passed and dropped this year. But that's exactly what happened in Washington. "I don't know [how to describe today]. The first moto was a little funky. I was a little off. I was tight in the first half and came around in the second half," said Tomac. "I got to the front pretty quick in the second moto and when I got to Kenny he kind of just gave it to me. I took it and laid it down after that. I was just in a good rhythm."

Roczen's lead in the 450 Class standings remains at 55 points over Tomac. Red Bull KTM's Marvin Musquin is third, 151 points out of the lead. "I'm pretty happy with my day. This is not my favorite place for some reason," said Roczen. "It was tough in the second moto. It was the driest I've ever seen this track and it was difficult with all the sun and shadows [to see and ride a normal pace]. I still got two good starts today and won a moto, so I'm leaving happy. It was one of those days where I'm finished second and I'm ok with it. I'm glad it's over."

Musquin's first moto was great, always a threat at this track (Marv having won three out of the last four motos he raced at Washougal although those were all in the 250's) Musquin fell at one point while catching Tomac in the first moto and still finished third. Second moto it was basically like a practice session for the #25 KTM rider as he couldn't hang with the top two guys but was also so far in front of fourth (a spirited battle between JGR Yamaha teammates Weston Peick and Justin Barcia) that he could just ride by himself.

We wondered with all the injuries in the 450MX class who would take the third spot that was left up for grabs but Musquin is making that a non-story with some great rides. In fact, he beat Tomac last week via 3-2 scores and this week at Washougal he was much better than any riders not named Eli or Ken. Great work for Marv.

So the 450MX class is winding down and Roczen's got a nice hold on that title although Tomac's Washougal gave us all hope there could be some real racing going on soon. In the 250's, Webb has more than a two moto lead and looks good to get his first motocross title. As we saw this weekend though, you just never know what you're going to see when you combine pressure, emotions and youth.

It's now a much-needed two-week break in the series that everyone in the pits seems to need, riders, teams and media included. It's been nine races in ten weeks so we'll pick this up for the last three in a row and see if anything changes then.



AMA MX WASHOUGAL



A happy reaping ground for Musquin in the past delivers for the Frenchman once more for what is turning into a quietly impressive first year on the works 450SX-F



A day of two halves for Barcia as the JGR Yamaha crew still saw both of their athletes enter the top five

AMA MX WASHOUGAL





Forkner continues to collect hype and status like candy floss on a stick. Questions will soon be asked of the teenager's supercross potential while his first 250MX overall cannot be far away

CLASSIFICATION & AMA CHAMPIONSHIP

450MX OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Eli Tomac, USA	Kawasaki
2	Ken Roczen, GER	Suzuki
3	Marvin Musquin, FRA	KTM
4	Weston Peick, USA	Yamaha
5	Justin Barcia, USA	Yamaha

250MX OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Alex Martin, USA	Yamaha
2	Austin Forkner, USA	Kawasaki
3	Cooper Webb, USA	Yamaha
4	Joey Savatgy, USA	Kawasaki
5	Justin Hill, USA	KTM

450MX STANDINGS AFTER 9 OF 12 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Ken Roczen	434
2 Eli Tomac	379
3 Marvin Musquin	283
4 Justin Barcia	244
5 Broc Tickle	217

250MX STANDINGS AFTER 9 OF 12 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Cooper Webb	372
2 Jeremy Martin	321
3 Joey Savatgy	319
4 Alex Martin	317
5 Austin Forkner	257

Christophe Pourcel's sixth position in the second moto came after a tremendous get-off in the first race where he was lucky to escape injury



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PULPING IN THE PITs...

By Steve Matthes

Some news and notes from the Pacific Northwest where we decided to stay back for a couple of days after the race...

-Andrew Short's in the final lap of his farewell season on the circuit. The solid veteran rider, a winner of 250SX, 250MX, 450SX and 450MX races, and now a BTOSports KTM rider has had a rough season. Injured before supercross, then again in his second race back from injury, the #29 started the outdoors slowly and there was a chance it turned into one of those farewell tours that you don't want to remember. But the 33-year old has started to get better and log some more "Shorty-like" results. 8-8-6-7 moto scores the last two races have pushed him into seventh in the 450MX points.

In talking to Short he credits the injuries to other riders as a reason for his better finishes but that's just his usual modest self. He's gotten more into the swing of things and his starts have come back as well. Short's had a great career, won a lot of races and was a top rider in the sport for a long time so it's cool to see him go out riding as hard as ever and logging very respectable finishes.

-JGR Yamaha's Weston Peick is one of those 450 riders, like Broc Tickle, Dean Wilson, Justin Brayton, James and Malcolm Stewart and many more that are looking for a ride for 2017. Peick had his best national of the year at Washougal with a fourth overall and was pretty satisfied with his day.

"It was definitely a good day. I didn't know what to expect. Obviously last weekend was tough on me, really banged up and stuff," Weston told me after the race, "I came into this weekend pretty much having no goal for a position. Obviously there's always a goal of top five but it was one of those things where we'll see how it goes, how you feel, endurance."

There are two 450 spots left at the RCH Suzuki team and one at the JGR team where Peick currently rides. Yoshimura Suzuki is leaning towards running a 250 program, so that's about it for factory 450 level teams. For now it seems that Peick is getting hot right at the ideal time and in talking to the JGR team, if all things are equal, they would lean towards keeping Peick next year as he works well with the team.

-Jeremy Martin's a two-time 250MX champion and it's a testament to his skills that he's having an "off" year and is still second in the points with an overall victory and four moto wins. Martin's been frustrated all year long with a bunch of things with his team and lately has been taking to pitting outside of the teams trailer in his own little area with an EZ-up. With Webb there and tensions high, Jeremy's been biting his tongue and just getting through the year before leaving them at the end of the year for GEICO. It's interesting in that the issues with Martin and the team will probably affect Team USA for this MXDN as there has been talk of putting Webb on the 450 and then either Joey Savatgy or Martin on the 250F.



But I can't see Martin and the team joining back together for one last race a month after the last national when he's checking out so that means Martin will probably be eliminated from the team. I don't know the whole story between Martin and the team but it's not good on either side it seems to me both parties are just looking forward to it all being over which is strange for a rider that has been so successful.

-Rough day for Rockstar Husqvarna at Washougal and as a former mechanic who's been there where the whole team struggles, I can relate. First up it was Christophe Pourcel who was running second in the opening 450MX moto before getting passed by Tomas late. Then in an uncharacteristic move, Pourcel scrubbed a little hard and went down hard over a jump. A sure podium went bye-bye just like that with a DNF. He did finish sixth in moto two. In the 250MX class, Zach Osborne's bike blew up in the first sprint which made it two out of the last three that his Husky wasn't able to finish the race. His teammate Marty Davalos was running second in the second race until the closing stages where he flew off a jump and into the crowd in what witnesses said was a scary crash. Three DNF's on the day for the team and they'll think about what could have been if only things had turned a little bit differently.





ODFU

T-shirt designers and growing influential presence in the British custom bike scene – ODFU – have come up with a new creation. Throttle for Life is the latest article from the company that expands their range of eye-catching clothing even further. The 'TfL' comes in white or black editions and is priced at 25 pounds like the rest of their t-shirts.

ODFU were the powers behind the recent OTOR t-shirt and limited numbers of the special edition still remain. Check out the ODFU Blog and online store for full details and where each order comes with personalised packaging. Size L comes out quite long, so ideal for taller customers, whereas the Medium tee is ideal for those with slimmer builds or who like a tighter fit.

www.odfu.co.uk







MotoGP

GoPro MOTORRAD GRAND PRIX

SACHSENRING · JULY 17th · Rnd 9 of 18

MotoGP winner: Marc Marquez, Honda

Moto2 winner: Johann Zarco, Kalex

Moto3 winner: Khairul Idham Pawi, Honda

MOTOGP DESCENDS INTO MOMENTARY CALM AFTER A FLURRY OF EXCITEMENT AND NERVES IN GERMANY AND A TWO-DAY BLAT OF DISCOVERY AROUND THE PACEY CURVES OF THE RED BULL RING. SACHSENRING SHOWERS MADE AN ALREADY UNPREDICTABLE MOTOGP CAMPAIGN EVEN HARDER TO CALL WITH MICHELIN PUSHING HARD TO ACCOMMODATE WISHES, WATERFALLS AND WINTERY WEATHER, AND STRATEGY AND FORTUNE CAME TO THE FORE ONCE MORE. WHILE THE DUCATIS WOULD GO ON TO SHINE TWO DAYS LATER IN AUSTRIA IT WAS HRC AND MARC MARQUEZ TOASTING SOME SHREWD DECISIONS AT ROUND NINE OF EIGHTEEN. HERE ARE SOME OF THE QUOTES AND TALKING POINTS FROM THE LAST SALVO OF MOTOGP AND UNTIL SPIELBERG BRINGS THE PADDOCK TOGETHER AGAIN IN MID-AUGUST...

GP DEUTSCHLAND

MotoGP GER

WET 'N WILD

Photos by CormacGP www.cormacgp.com

Words by Adam Wheeler



HEY GEORGE: WHAT GIVES?

Talk around **Jorge Lorenzo** only just stopped short of words like 'crisis' being whispered. There were certainly questions asked of the World Champion's confidence so shortly after a lacklustre feeling and race at Assen and in the wake of three astonishing crashes from Friday morning and into Saturday in Germany. Fifteenth place in the race was an exercise in total damage limitation. Lorenzo's indifference to the Yamaha-Michelin-damp combination meant a hard weekend from the moment grey clouds blew across the Saxony region. To see '99' struggling so intensely was even a topic for his peers to discuss.

"To straightaway make a crash...I think he is sensitive with this," offered Yamaha brandmate Pol Espargaro. "When he crashes he 'feels' it and loses a lot of confidence. He has always been like this. He is a really precise rider and if he doesn't feel perfect then he doesn't feel confident to ride as Jorge normally rides. His riding style is based on the front [end] and if he does not have the feeling then he is not fast."

"It is a nice thing – not that Jorge is suffering – but for you guys to understand that when it is a little bit 'off' then everybody looks basic," assessed Bradley Smith. "That's what it has been like this year, if you cannot find the setting or the feeling then it doesn't matter who you are or what you have done in the past you cannot make this bike go fast. I've been in that situation where I have pushed, crashed and had to accept it. It is nice that a world champion is going through that same problem and same issues. Everyone can struggle and it is reassuring that it might not just be me."

"It is a combination of factors that make me slow," the Spaniard himself justified. "The Yamaha struggled in these conditions and I struggled more. With low grip and the crash in the morning it was difficult to push. We are not

competitive in any area because the electronics in the corner with low grip is not reacting smoothly. And we also don't have grip in acceleration."

There was conjecture that Lorenzo's normally steely focus had been ruffled by thoughts and plans concerning his Ducati mount for 2017. It seems a little absurd for a rider operating at Lorenzo's level to take his eye off the ball. "Someone who is thinking about next year does not crash three times," said Espargaro. "Someone who isn't 'here' doesn't try that hard...but he is, and if he crashes it means he is pushing. Maybe he is not 100% confident or has the things under control but it is not a matter of motivation. I also have a contract for two years but I try and I crash!"

"It is possible to lose focus and it happens to some riders but for Jorge and riders like myself we deserve to win just as much as anybody and that is much more important than anything that can happen in the future," he added. "What you do now [has everything to do with] your image; if you are destroying this because you are losing time and thinking of the future then this is silly. It is about respect. Jorge is motivated it is just about confidence."



Smith gave some insight for a racer trying to emerge from a hole that has seen both race bikes wrecked in a matter of hours. The Englishman himself fell five times at Sachsenring the previous year and reevaluated his approach to have a stellar second half of the season.



"It is easy to make mistakes but there is no magic cure to find the solution," he opined. "Rather than hit your head against a brick wall you just have to work on the small details to get there. We saw the emotion come out when he crashed in QP2 and didn't even look at the bike, just walked off and as a rider you feel that. You think 'I don't know what to do now'. You can pretty much guarantee that his setting sheet over the last few sessions has been everywhere trying to make this work."

Lorenzo stayed on two wheels during a quiet race and had enough humour to smile and admit that he might have had more victories on circuit orientated to right hand corners (there are only two at Sachsenring) and he was better on this side of the bike. When it turned to the bigger picture he was also adamant in the face of a sharp mid-season dip.

"The championship is not finished while we all have mathematical options to win," he said. "Anything can happen and we saw Marc crash in warm-up and he was lucky not to get injured. We have to keep positive and believe that this is possible. We have to recover the confidence and good results that we don't have now. The last two races have been very bad for us in different circumstances."

"I must do something...especially because the Michelin tyres in these conditions changes a lot the feeling we have compared to the Bridgestone when it is raining. Sometimes I could fight for the win, sometimes for fifth place but now with this bike and in these conditions I struggle much more. In warm-up I was terrible, four second slower than fastest. In the race I improved by a second and a half."

"I hope I can do something outside of this MotoGP 'world' to improve my confidence. I am seeing that it isn't easy for me to get the confidence with these tyres."

Scott Redding's early switch to intermediate tyres was both a masterstroke and an eventual handicap. The 23 year old was clearly fuming to be pipped to a second consecutive podium finish on the Octo Pramac machine by Andrea Dovizioso on the last lap having been as high as second place. "It was borderline," he said. "I pitted with ten or eleven laps left and I can't communicate with the team. To be honest if everyone chose the intermediate tyres it wouldn't have been a problem. But the problem was they [Crutchlow, Marquez] went with slicks and maybe that was [their] experience as there was only so many times they had used them in the past."

One of the visual standouts of the race was the drag from the last corner to the first between the Brit and countryman Cal Crutchlow that was so close that the latter seemed to edge his leg out to deter Redding from diving back on the inside. The reality was different to the images. "I wasn't giving him any more space," Redding admitted. "The problem was we were side-by-side going into the braking area and I had an intermediate; he had a slick. There was nothing I could do. The same when Andrea got me; it was all straight line speed. He just f**king bombed me. That was with the lack of rear grip and acceleration coming down the hill. I felt like I was robbed. This is part of racing and sometimes it changes. At times you have to take the best with the best and the bad with the bad. It's not really bad... but it just feels like it at the moment."

"I always put my leg out but I actually locked the front brake, and I put it there because I honestly thought I was going to the floor. It probably looked like I was going to kick him off but no! I was thinking 's**t; I'm not going to stop' I would have ended up in Turn 11 behind the wall," Crutchlow explained.





TEAMS TIED UP

Dorna, IRTA and the independent teams gave a short press conference about the fixing of assistance to the seven crews outside of the factory elite on Saturday (although Gresini's presence as Aprilia's main channel was questionable). Crucially it saw confirmation that for the next five years Dorna have increased their payment and support 100% to the teams and will cover the maximum cost of leasing machinery from the six manufacturers with a fixed price of 2.2 million euros; essentially ending any sense of a marketplace for a brand to tout their technology to the richest set-ups.

When asked for his opinion on the matter while inside the vast LCR hospitality (built essentially for a one-bike racing effort) Cal Crutchlow said. "For sure this will help the satellite teams even if this team is not struggling for money. Lucio [Cecchinello] changes the sponsor all the time but I think this is more his choice. It [the Dorna support] is great and this is the way motorcycle racing should be. Carmelo is fantastic with stuff like this and does a great job in helping the teams, making the rules fair and listening a lot to the riders."

"It makes Lucio's life easier," '35' went on. "What we need to change is the crash-damage parts bill! At the end of the day you have to push and Lucio knows this as a rider. I'm sure he would prefer that I present him with a crash-damage bill than a fifteenth place."

Dorna's sponsorship portfolio and excellent TV rights sales obviously help pump more money back into the paddock. MXGP followers – and even diminishing satellite teams – might look upon this news with envy but the numbers simply don't stack-up in MXGP. Teams are assisted with travel freight and this is a point in which perhaps further investigation can be done to help more squads reach the full extent of the MXGP calendar as motocross currently has the same amount of flyaways as MotoGP (even if they do carry a fraction of the same cargo abroad).





MotoGP GER



PAWI POWER AND ZARCO ZOOMING

Moto3 saw nine fallers and twelve in Moto2 as the two classes bore the brunt of the wet conditions. While Khairul Idham Pawi streaked ahead KTM's Brad Binder put in a champion's performance to take a conservative eighth place and lose marginal points to Jorge Navarro in seventh; the duo are split by 47 marks. Johann Zarco won his fourth race of the season in Moto2 by just half a second from future teammate Jonas Folger in a gripping last corner showdown and watched both Alex Rins and Sam Lowes crash out to inflate his cushion to 25 points on the Ajo Motorsport Kalex.



Dani Pedrosa finished sixth and claimed to have new chassis parts for the RCV in Germany. His words on Thursday were particularly foreboding. "One key to unlocking this track is the temperature and we see many crashes at the start of the weekend," he offered mindful of the grey skies and a Friday practice and qualification schedule that would be complicated. The 30 year old also gave some insight to post-Sachsenring/Spielberg and what the four week break in the calendar will entail. "It will feels like a long time and it can be difficult to control the peaks of your shape," '26' said. "You need to rest but also train and it can be quite difficult to manage. In the next weeks I will do a bit of everything because it is important to have the correct timing."

MotoGP GER





Q2, fourth on the grid and leading seven laps of the wet half of the Grand Prix; there were elements of this race that were encouraging for **Danilo Petrucci** even if the second half of his Sachsenring experience involved a crash, a fiery Ducati (literally) and a DNF. Still bearing a swollen right hand Petrux is one of the funniest and amiable talkers in MotoGP; a briefing on Saturday with a group of international journalists outside his Octo Pramac pit garage ends with a pause and a “are you not tired to hear my bullshit? Always the same bullshit!”

On Sunday he was still on good form. “If someone would say a few months ago that I would end up leading a MotoGP race then I wouldn’t have listened to him! I chose the hard front because I could see it wasn’t raining any more. I was in a good place but I made a mistake and I am so sorry for the team.”

“Since Friday we were competitive. It is a very flowing track and it is difficult to understand the different speed and the gap is very close. I thought I was the first independent [rider] but I saw the big screen and Barbera and thought ‘shit!’. In the pitbox I saw I had the same time as Valentino and that was the second cut to my balls; I will never be happy! But it is tomorrow that counts. If it is wet then everyone will say: “It’s raining!” and I will say, “I know! We are wet!”



Coming in for some criticism was **Valentino Rossi**. The Italian seemingly stayed out too long as part of the four-rider chase for the lead but the switch to a second bike with intermediate tyres meant he had little chance of flying with Marquez, Crutchlow and Dovizioso. "I was very slow on the intermediate tyre in the second part of the race when it was getting dry so if I stopped earlier then it wouldn't have changed a lot; maybe I could have arrived to sixth place," he reasoned. "I had no feeling with the bike when I changed. If we could go back in time then it would have been interesting to try the slick but on paper the slick could also have been more difficult. Our bike is difficult to ride because it does not give enough information to push from the beginning."

Earlier in the weekend Rossi had not been overly keen about his possibilities on the Yamaha, saying that the M1 is not ideally suited to the tight and twisty course and with Sachsenring as the slowest layout on the calendar he would have his hands full. Eighth place and another win from Marquez left Rossi staring at a 59 point chasm to the lead. "I think it is very difficult," he mused on pulling the 2013 and 2014 champion back in. "In these first races I do not take the amount of points I know I could take because I did some mistakes. The distance with Marquez and the top is very high. The championship is long and we need to work to be competitive."





MotoGP GER

With Johann Zarco confirming a MotoGP colour change from presumed Suzuki blue to Tech3 Yamaha black at Sachsenring (Valentino Rossi: "For sure he is one of the best riders in Moto2 and it will be interesting to see him with the M1. He has a particular riding style and saves the tyres until the end of the race; we will have to see how he adapts.") to pair up with Jonas Folger the French team will have a line-up bursting with both enthusiasm and desire as well as inexperience.

It meant that most of the remaining speculation on 2017 saddles centred around **Eugene Laverty** amidst rumours that Alvaro Bautista will join the Aspar crew at the end of the season and with 2016 Desmosedici equipment. There was no such guarantee for the Irishman and his dilemma of heading back to a very Brit-centric World Superbike series for a well-paid and well-supported ride or to remain in MotoGP at least for another term was one that didn't have an easy answer. Laverty – whose skill and maturity helped him to eleventh position in a difficult race – was supposed to make his decision over the weekend but was allegedly still in two minds as an overcast afternoon turned to dark in Germany. After a DNF Stefan Bradl's MotoGP future looked even shakier still. The German admitted in the pre-event press conference that he had no news to give.

CAL'S COMEBACK

Four DNFs and just 40 points means that 2016 has not been a vintage season so far in Cal Crutchlow's year career but Germany was not only a second in Honda colours and first for the season but also re-emphasised his traits of determination and relentlessness. A timely reminder indeed and summed by his post-race comment: "It takes balls to ride with slicks and I took advantage of them." Crutchlow was a despondent figure during the weekend with his pace in the dry even if he did make it into Q2 on Saturday. "I cannot tell you how hard it is to ride that bike around here," he said. "The tyres are too soft and if you overheat the front then you are on the floor. If you use the hard and there is no grip at all. On the Yamaha you'll be smoking a cigar here."

Track temperatures were combined with rain on Sunday and the team's decision to put Crutchlow out on slicks for the bike change was the catalyst for his second place; equaling a career best and with the extra emotional angle that the 30 year old will soon be a father (just the second on the MotoGP grid behind Dovizioso) with wife Lucy at home anticipating birth in the coming weeks. "I left as late as possible and will get back as soon as I can," he said. "It was only the second time in nine years she has not been here and she works as hard for me as what I do to win in MotoGP. It has been a tough weekend without her here but we are dead excited to have our first baby."







“COME IN NO.46”: RADIOS

Recent furore over the use and advantage of radios in Formula One became a topical subject in MotoGP in Germany. Clearly a rider's ability to inform the team of his bike's feeling and handling – particularly in changing conditions or climate – would be an advantage but the idea split opinion among the riders that were asked.

“It is not Formula One but for sure if we have the communication now direct with the box then it can be a lot easier,” said Rossi. “For example in Assen if they said to me I have two seconds of advantage I can slow down and avoid the mistake. I don't know why we don't have the radio – maybe the cost.”

“No, I cannot imagine someone speaking to me at 100mph,” opined Marquez. “This is not Formula One. If you have a good plan before the race then you know. In our team we work a lot on these situation after 2013 in Australia!”

“Can you imagine me having a voice in my ear?! I would be like Kimi [Raikkonen] in F1; you could imagine what I'd say back,” semi-joked Crutchlow. “I can understand [having it] because if you don't understand the board...I couldn't see mine but I saw Andrea's saying 'Box' and wondered 'why are they telling him to come in when he's staying out?' Then he suddenly went in and I thought I should as well.”

“My opinion is a little bit different,” offered Dovizioso. “I think it would easier to manage everything but we are not F1 and we should stay like this.”





There was a feeling of excitement around **Maverick Viñales** through Friday and Saturday as the Suzuki man hit the top spot in FP2, third in FP3 and fourth in FP4 and cascaded down corners like The Waterfall. Come a wet Sunday and the '25' was out of the running. "The result is not satisfying at all and it means we are not yet competitive in the wet races," he

said. "We still have to improve traction. With these conditions I cannot push and be performing because I can't find acceleration. It is a problem we have also in the dry but there I can counterbalance with the riding, and on wet it becomes bigger and bigger, so it is hard to keep the competitor's pace."

A second 2016 podium for **Andrea Dovizioso** and with less drama than teammate Andrea Iannone who veered across the track to be one of the first to pit...but for intermediates. 'Dovi' fronted the race once Petrucci had tumbled and provided some perspective for race fans puzzled as to why none of the leaders persisted in pitting for change with a thin dry line getting

lighter and lighter in shade. "When you are riding in the rain then you are always scared of taking the slick," he said. "After a few laps you think 'it was the right choice' but to make that decision and change early during the race is something totally different than when you watch on TV. It is much more difficult when you are inside the race."





GIVES

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Remarkably Marc Marquez now has seven wins in a row at the Sachsenring and could be one of the saddest MotoGP riders if the new five-year agreement between Dorna and the German promoters makes a touted switch to the Nurburgring for 2017. Marquez rode his luck to post the '7'. A nasty crash in warm-up saw him almost hit by the Honda. He then had an off-track excursion in the rain that caused the '14 champ to slump to ninth position and hasten a risk to try slicks.

"Today was another crazy race!" he said. "I lost the front because I was trying a lot so I went onto the grass and I went 'click: motocross!' Sit back, full gas and ride it! The traction control was stopping me too much!" he joked of one of the pivotal moments of this German Grand Prix. "When I changed the bike [then the next] two or three corners were still completely wet and I was very careful there but for the rest of the circuit I was pushing like normal. It was strange; I saw the pitboard and it said 'P4' and then the next one was 'P1, 20 secs' and I thought 'OK' and I just managed the distance."

Marquez also revealed that his team's strategy is very much like the way the Catalan races his RCV. "For our team the intermediate tyre does not exist: it is either wet or dry," he revealed. "Otherwise there is that confusion: 'how do you tell the team what tyres you want'? The slick was the correct answer as we do not know the limit of the intermediates. I took a lot of risks because the dry line was very tight."

So, a sizeable lead in a season where Marquez has displayed added nuance in race situations and vast skill with a motorcycle that was deemed almost impossible during pre-season tests. '93' is still hesitating before counting his eggs. "These last two races have been really good for me. I won many points. Maybe I was not the fastest rider on the track but I was the most consistent and the complete opposite to last year. So I am happy now to go to the beach, relax with friends and have some parties but remembering that the second part of the season will be tough and will prepare for it," he commented.

"When you are leading with this gap then it gives you some special confidence but you must be careful not to be over-confident. In 2014 I was leading with a lot of points – more than now – but then we crashed in Misano and Aragon and I lost fifty points. We must take care because we are only in the middle of the season."



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SAM LOWES ON Moto2

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by CormacGP

MINT!

SAM LOWES TALKS LIFE AT THE TOP IN Moto2

“HE loves it...” was Monster Energy DRT Kawasaki’s Tommy Searle’s description when asked of friend and occasional co-trainer Sam Lowes. The Grand Prix winning motocrosser was speaking in the general sense and the truth is that you’ll be hard-pressed to find a more irrepressible, buoyant, appreciative and friendly rider in the MotoGP paddock than the 25 year old. Lowes is in the thick of a title dispute with Alex Rins and a strong Johann Zarco as he bids to become the first Brit to win the intermediate crown (one year after Danny Kent ruled Moto3) and add the trophy to his British and World Supersport accolades. A fifteen minute chat with Sam easily rolls onto double that time and the Isle of Man resident talks at a rapid pace to-boot. From humble beginning to subverting opinions here’s what we found out...



Being slightly late for any interview is embarrassing and quite sloppy but I have a good excuse (an over-running press conference) for my ten-minute tardiness with Sam Lowes. Arriving at the Gresini team's Federal Oil hospitality the 25 year old has already been talking, and judging by the pace of his converse, the rapid-fire stories, little off-the-record comments and a general satisfied air then another sit-down at about life at the top edge of MotoGP is not a chore for the former British and World Super-sport champ.

It is hard not to be infected by Lowes' enthusiasm. Even after a damp disaster at Sachsenring he is chatty and affable post-race and post-two crashes, although the grin doesn't quite pop up with the same regularity as any other time you'll bump into him around the paddock.

One half of another set of road racing siblings (twin Alex is trying to make his way on the works Yamaha in WorldSBK) Sam is in this third Moto2 term and currently his best with victory in Jerez and three more podiums. His rear wheel sliding dominance at Jerez was a joy to behold and his verve for racing and sparkiness to get on track was a vivid part of the make-up that persuaded Aprilia to give him a MotoGP bow in 2017 and 2018.

It would be a shame to paraphrase any more of Sam's story when he does such a good job of telling it himself. From pennies to pole positions and touching distance of the record books and the hallowed asphalt of the MotoGP pit garage here is '22's take on the world...



You've been building up to this level of performance for a few years...even though you have won championships this must be some of the best moments of your career...

Yeah, even though I won Supersport I was under no illusion that it would be easy coming into this paddock. I took the [only] ride that I could and I am happy that I did that to get here. I knew it would be difficult in the beginning. A lot of the tracks are difficult and I only knew seven of them so there was eleven to find out about! You can be half a second off and qualify tenth and everybody thinks you are rubbish. It was hard coming from Supersport and I felt that I had to prove myself. Anything negative [in terms of results] seemed to carry the judgement that 'Supersport is crap'. I feel great now and I am starting to prove myself a bit. I'm in a good position with a good team and a good bike. It is the first year – in theory

– that I have the same bike as my competitors. I think some of the results so far have showed something. The level at Supersport was nothing to do with me but some people who have been in Grand Prix for fifteen years look negatively towards that paddock; which is wrong really. I felt it...and didn't expect it. In the first year of Moto2 I had a couple of front rows but no rides or results that showed I could do the job. Last year I won a race and had four-five podiums and a couple of pole positions and it showed I was fast and could 'do it' in the races. A couple of results gets the ball rolling, people look at you in a different way and you take confidence from it. Even more so this year and fighting for the championship is another confidence boost. I don't feel the negativity so much.

What about that negativity? Is it insecurity?

I think so. I'm a bit like that; I feel that I have to please everybody-

Why?

I don't know. I think it is just where I have come from and the need to prove myself. It is strange. I have not had a career like a lot of the guys I am racing against and who grew up into this [Grand Prix]. At eighteen years old I was going to work! I wasn't a Pro...and I think that is why I sometimes need to pinch myself: I was leading this series and next year I'm going to be a MotoGP rider and that's from nothing apart from hard work, learning and trying to get better. In the first year – I wouldn't say 'in awe' – but I had a little bit of the feeling that I wouldn't have expected to be here five years ago.

What about that transition? You won a world championship – with is remarkable in any discipline or sport – and have now risen to the top of Moto2. It must have been an interesting trip...

I don't think you ever take a step back in life. I used to watch this class and think 'Oh, that kid's going well...'. I believe in myself 100%. I'm not a big-headed person but now I am here and have seen and lived it then I know I can beat everybody in this class. When I won in America in 2015 it was really strange.

D

FEATURE





SAM LOWES ON Moto2

“I don’t want to be talking at fifty years of age trying to persuade you how fast I was...”



I'd come off a bad year and people were not talking about me. I actually tried to get out; I didn't want to be in that team again but winning that Grand Prix early on changed me. Nobody can ever take a Grand Prix win away from you when you achieve it. Since Barry Sheene how many Brits have won a GP? Five? Six? Seven? Not many. It is a nice feeling to be in that group and it gave me a lot of confidence; the feeling that I was meant to be here. There are others who have been racing ten years and never won a Grand Prix. I took a step up and now I feel I should be here.

How is it living with reminders of the achievement? The videos, reports, images, more attention; the idea you have put your name in the history books...

Oh, 100% [great]. Alex and I talk about it a lot. I'll send him a message saying I am struggling and doing s**t and he text me back saying 'Sam, you're third in FP2, chill out!'

Then you think 'of course...'. I'll have a sauna in my apartment in the Isle of Man and I'll sit in it after the race and think about the weekend. I'd visualise Rossi wheeling over the line years ago and you think 'I'd love to do that at a Grand Prix, stick my leg off the back like a legend! It was surreal doing it at Jerez because I'd thought about the moment many times in the past. Troy Corser also did it. We're not motocrossers so we cannot whip the bike to look cool. It was such an amazing feeling to do that and my Mum said it was on the back page of MCN...and Rossi won as well in Jerez! When I was ten years old he was already in the 500s and now I was on the back page with him: it was just mint. It is hard to explain how things like that affect you. It doesn't really change you but it has some impact. It is how you deal with it. I am loving life. If someone gave me the possibility to change one thing in my life then I'd change nothing. OK, I'd like ten million pounds...but apart from that I am



someone who is genuinely living the dream. Even when I was winning Supersport I did not necessarily think I could come here and win but deep down in my heart I knew I could. If I had the bike I knew I could. Four years for me has in some ways been a long time and in some ways it hasn't, especially with our job where the seasons go so fast. Sometimes you just need to stop and take it in.

Do you catch yourself thinking about the journey? From those Sunday nights when nobody wanted to talk with you to the back pages of MCN...

In my first year here I don't think I did any interviews! You do think about it...and also what you sacrificed. I had a lot of deals and gave up a lot in Supersport. I could have gone to world superbike with the same team for quite a decent amount of money – more than some get in MotoGP – but instead I gave all of my world championship bonus back to them and paid

another 50,000 to leave the team to come here and ride for 80,000 in Moto2. I literally rode for 30k to come here. I did it because I knew I wouldn't be happy if I never tried it. I could have come here and done s**t and gone back and I could have easily been in that position thinking 'well, that wasn't worth it Sam'. Money wasn't the priority because I had to do it. I had to have a go. It was the right time as well...and before I got on Pirelli tyres on a Superbike. I had to go and try...and I'm happy I did.

Do you feel the World Supersport title gave you any currency here at all?

I think so, yeah. I think it is hard to get into racing anywhere and especially in Moto2 and I was getting paid to ride even from the first year. If I had been a so-so rider in Supersport then I think I would have had to pay to ride. The championship gave me the opportunity. Winning that title also gave me a lot personally: confidence, belief and something nobody can

take from me. Ian Hutchinson stayed at my house during the TT and I have the championship trophy on the living room table and he said me a message saying 'thanks for the inspiration'. It was nice he sent that...and it's the reason I have it there, and the [FIM] certificate on the wall. It might only be Supersport but is something – an achievement – I'll always have. That trophy drove me to Moto2 and gave me the confidence to have a go at it. It is the same for MotoGP: I will go on that bike and try to do better than people think, beat my teammate and stake my claim to be in the class. If I didn't have a go then I wouldn't be able to live with myself. I can personally live with going there and maybe not being the fastest or not getting the amazing results-

Why?

Because they are the best mate! They have been here since they were fifteen and they've had the opportunity. If I cannot do it then at least I had a f**king good try; I'd be wounded... but I can live with it. 'What if' is a horrible feeling. I used to do it with women! I can handle having a good go at something and maybe it falls short, and would I prefer that than having sat there and not done anything. I don't want to be talking at fifty years of age trying to persuade you how fast I was. You want to be the guy that doesn't need to talk about it. Stefan Everts, Mick Doohan don't need to tell people how good they were-

Jean-Michel Bayle...

I met him last year, what a legend, I think he is a top class man. I wanted a photo with him. He did alright when he came here.

I think it is fantastic that you can look at what you have done and feel proud but do you get people saying "don't get complacent" or "shoot for the stars a bit more"...

I'm quite a positive guy and I generally love life. All I do when I get up is think about the Moto2 World Championship. Nobody could want this thing more than me. When I go to MotoGP I'll approach it with the same attitude but what's the point of achieving things if you cannot sit back and enjoy it? There is no point. We've all come from different places and some have had it a lot harder than me but I've worked and seen both sides of the coin. It is not that I am necessarily happy with what I have done – because I want more – but I appreciate what I have done. It might not have been possible if a few turns went the other way. In 2010 I was meant to pay 40,000 to ride in British Supersport and my Dad said we had no money and we'd have to sell the bikes we owned. We were skint. I went to Gareth at GNS racing – top, top bloke – I was eighteen years old and I said: "I think on a top bike I can do a good job". So I had 16,000 after we'd sold everything and my Dad said "what about the rest?" and I said my plan was to do as well as I could early on and try to sort something out. I won my first two races. After the fourth race I was still leading the championship and I had to say: "Gareth, I've got no money mate. We either stop now or carry on." I was a young kid and had given the 16k up front that he was happy with. We were getting on well and we were doing well on the track and he appreciated my honesty and he said we'd carry on and do what we could. He kept the prize money but there wasn't really much anyway. I won the championship. The guy was a legend. He could have said, "no, pay up" and that might have been the end of my career. Simon Buckmaster then rang me up and asked if I'd ride his bike in world supersport and I got a small salary and expenses paid to race around the world. Amazing. I led the first race and finished third and built up from there.

SAM LOWES ON Moto2





Does it surprise you how 'seat-of-the-pants' life can be?

Life surprises me in how one small thing can end up changing so much. If I'd said: "OK Dad, I understand we cannot do it..." then where would I be now? My Dad is an electrician so maybe I'd be working for him hating life, watching MotoGP every weekend wishing I could do it. This all helps me and I think it gives me the edge over some people. Of course I would love to win in MotoGP but I'm also not an idiot. I know that it is hard and you have to be realistic with your expectations without choking your self-belief. If I think I am going to win at Qatar next year for my first race then I'm an idiot. If I go there with the job of improving on a MotoGP bike and use my teammate as a gauge and aim for the top ten then that's something to try for. If I can go to Aprilia as Moto2 Champion and give a good account of myself then who is to say where I can be in a couple of years when some others are retiring? [Danilo] Petrucci is another one who has built up through MotoGP while someone like [Alex] Rins was always going to move up with a good contract – that's just the way it is. People ask me "why Aprilia?" it is not that bad...

You're a well know name in British racing but do you find people's reactions to you have changed in the last six months? Is the fame game coming in?

A little bit yeah...it's nice as well. A little bit in airports. I now live on the Isle of Man which is massively into racing. I do feel it a bit more. Especially at home and around my Mum and Dad's. I haven't really thought about it over time before but definitely in the last year or so just because Grand Prix is pretty big. I want – like everybody – to be the one that brings Britain strongly into Grand Prix. I don't mean

by being world champion ten times but by just trying to make a difference and by making it exciting and getting important results and doing important things. I love racing and I love MotoGP and we need more Brits here. It has been good recently with Danny, Scott, Cal, Bradley and me doing quite well but then who is coming up? Maybe Rory Skinner but he's still so young and there is not much else. We need more. I need to win this championship because it changes everything. If I go to MotoGP as World Champion then you stake your claim to something.

But you are gaining fans for the way you ride the bike as well. Those scenes in Jerez were pretty exciting...

I'd love to be doing it in MotoGP as well...just not in 20th place! It is hard to get there and I think that Aprilia project will surprise people and there are big steps to be taken. It will be good enough for me to do what I need to do. Overall I think I'd just like to do something so people think of me as an important part of British racing. I want to be remembered as somebody who was impressive. The face has to fit in this sport and that's just the way it is but I like to think I have some fans and I'm not a dickhead; I have time for people. I want to win and I also want that legacy because there are so many fast riders. That's why championships are important. If I can win Moto2 then I'll be the first to have both titles with Supersport; OK, it's not MotoGP but then it also something! British Supersport, World Supersport, Moto2 and hopefully a MotoGP race winner...I don't think that's a bad career.



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Monster Energy Girls
By Ray Archer







'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at **www.ontrackoffroad.com** every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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